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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I AND NEA/IR; NSC FOR PHEE AND VROOMAN

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SUBJECT: MEK/ASHRAF: GOI SAYS IT WILL NOT MOVE MEK UNTIL
AFTER MARCH ELECTIONS

REF: A. A) BAGHDAD 2823
[1](#)B. B) BAGHDAD 2841

Classified By: A/DCM GARY A. GRAPPO for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1.(C) SUMMARY: The head of the GOI Ashraf Committee Ali Yassery and Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Selim asserted in separate meetings with POL M/C that the GOI has no plans to move the MEK from Ashraf before the March 2010 elections. Yassery stated that the planned relocation site in Muthanna province will not be ready for at least six months, and expressed his hope that Camp Echo in Diwaniyeh province would be turned over to the GOI after the March election to be used as a relocation site. Yassery will travel to Brussels on January 15 to encourage EU governments to accept MEK defectors as refugees, and Minister Selim may accompany him. In addition to requesting USG support for the GOI appeal to the EU, Yassery also inquired about USG acceptance of properly vetted MEK refugees. This cable contains an action request in paragraph 12. END SUMMARY.

GOI PLANS TO APPEAL TO EU

2.(C) In a December 20 meeting with Political Minister Counselor (POL M/C), GOI Ashraf Committee head Ali Yassery explained his plans to travel to Brussels on January 15 with Human Rights Minister Wijdan Selim to appeal to EU governments to resettle members of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) as refugees. Yassery noted that the MEK leadership has stated its willingness to be resettled to Europe, and expressed his belief that if a number such as 50 persons were accepted for resettlement, then the MEK would start to &trust our word,8 and more would go. Speaking about the December 15 &soft move8, Yassery said the intention was to show the international media, which he said focuses only on the MEK side, that the Iraqis are - what they think.8 He said that the international community should understand the problem from the Iraqi side also.

3.(C) In a separate meeting December 21, Minister Selim expressed some reservations about accompanying Yassery to Brussels. She commented that the GOI may be relying too heavily on her reputation with the EU, without sufficiently heeding her input and recommendations. The visit is reportedly dependent on her participation. The minister said that if she agrees to go to Brussels, she will insist on having greater authority on policies related to the MEK.

4.(C) Minister Selim believed that it would be good for the GOI to attempt another &soft move8 following the January 15 visit to Brussels. She suggested that the buses might stay at Ashraf for up to two days on the next attempt, to give residents more time to leave, if they desire. The minister stressed again that it would not be a forced move, and said

the GOI wants UNAMI, ICRC, and other international organizations to be present the next time, rather than just the media, as on December 15. Yassery presented a different view, saying it was unlikely that the GOI would make another attempt before the elections.

THE MEK,S UNHELPFUL BEHAVIOR

5.(C) The GOI Ashraf committee head stated that the committee has prepared a complete briefing for EU governments on MEK activities. He lamented that even though the GOI has been very accommodating, the MEK persist in their unhelpful behavior. Yassery cited an incident in which he said military uniforms were found hidden under a shipment of food.

Asked whether GOI forces search vehicles prior to their entry into Ashraf, Yassery confirmed that both the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police search the vehicles. When POL M/C raised the issue of the uniforms with Minister Selim in a separate meeting, she countered that it was not a shipment of uniforms that was disrupted (the MEK make their own uniforms, she said), rather what appeared to be military equipment and components but not/not weapons.

REASONS FOR THE MOVE

6.(C) Speaking about the GOI intention to relocate the MEK from Ashraf, POL M/C advised that the GOI should be prepared to explain its reasons for this policy during its meetings with EU governments. POL M/C asked why the GOI could not negotiate with the MEK to allow the GOI to assume full control of the camp, instead of moving the MEK from Ashraf. Minister Selim responded that the GOI has attempted to do this on several occasions over the past two years, offering

GOI assistance for the hospital and water station, among other things. She said the MEK declined, claiming that the Iraqis will look at our women. Minister Selim disputed the MEK,s claims that during the GOI move to establish a police station in Ashraf in July 2009, GOI forces killed nine MEK members. She noted that the MEK did not take their dead to hospitals or allow autopsies to be performed, which she said cast doubt on the actual circumstances of their deaths.

7.(C) Elaborating on GOI reasons for moving the MEK from Ashraf, Minister Selim stated that the GOI is concerned about the MEK,s anti-Iraq activities and that the Ashraf residents may be armed, which is unacceptable. Additionally, the GOI prefers to move the MEK further from the border with Iran, for security reasons. Finally, the minister explained, the GOI believe that a move from Ashraf would break the control of MEK leaders over the rank-and-file members, thereby giving MEK members the freedom to leave the organization. In such a case, POL M/C advised stressing the last point, emphasizing that the MEK leaders may be violating the rights of the members by controlling their access to the outside world and denying MEK members the freedom to leave the camp and the organization.

8.(C) Minister Selim also spoke about the MEK,s relations with residents of neighboring villages in Diyala province, where Ashraf is located. Selim said that the MEK has developed excellent relations with the residents of Diyala province, primarily because the MEK make services and facilities available to the residents of Diyala (who are mostly Sunni), such as the hospital, mosque, water pump station, and roads. She said she has advised the GOI to improve its provision of services to Diyala residents, in order to reduce their reliance on the MEK for services. The Minister said this was one of the main issues for the GOI related to the move.

NO GOOD RELOCATION SITE IN IRAQ

9.(C) Yassery told POL M/C that the planned relocation site of Camp Samawa in Muthanna province would likely not be ready for at least 6 months, and expressed his belief that Camp Echo in Diwaniyeh would be a more expedient option for a

relocation site. Yassery said he believed that Camp Echo would be returned to the GOI at some time following the elections.

EXTERNAL RESETTLEMENT OF MEK REFUGEES

10.(C) The MEK leadership has expressed its willingness to be resettled to Europe (see ref A), and Yassery asked for USG support in encouraging EU governments to accept the MEK. Yassery also asked the USG to consider accepting some MEK defectors as refugees.

11.(C) COMMENT: GOI Ashraf committee officials continue to hint that the resettlement of a few hundred Ashraf residents to European countries would substantially reduce the political pressure on the Maliki government to move the MEK from Ashraf in the near future. EU missions in Baghdad have been largely non-committal to GOI requests. EU missions have stated their willingness to consider the cases of MEK members who have nationality ties to their countries, but little beyond that (see ref B). Yassery requested USG support in encouraging EU governments to resettle some MEK members.

12.(C) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests that the Department consider encouraging EU missions in Washington to accept properly vetted MEK defectors for refugee resettlement, properly vetted MEK defectors for refugee resettlement, particularly those that have nationality ties to EU countries. In addition, Post requests clarification on the U.S. legal prohibitions to resettlement of MEK refugees in the United States.
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